for a time of from 30 minutes to 24 hours before treating the whole fish according to the method of Claim 1.

8. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the aqueous alkaline solution has a pH of higher than 7.0.

9. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the whole fish are treated with the aqueous alkali solution from 1 minute to 24 hours at a temperature of from 0 to 10°C.

11. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the time for the washing off of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is from 1 minute to 24 hours.

12. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish comprises spraying the alkali-treated whole fish with an acidic solution at a pH of from 4.0 to 6.6.

14. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish comprises immersing the alkali-treated whole fish in an acidic solution at a pH of from 4.0 to 6.8.

16. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the neutralizing of the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is performed during the course of boiling the whole fish in a solution of from 1 to 10% salt water by mass.

17. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising any one of the steps selected from the group consisting of treating the whole fish with salt water, boiling the whole fish, draining the whole fish, cooling the whole fish, directly packing the whole fish in bags, and combinations thereof after the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is washed or neutralized.

18. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising

treating the whole fish with a solution comprising from 1 to 5% salt water for a time from 10 minutes to 5 hours at a temperature not greater than 10°C;

washing the whole fish with water;

draining the whole fish; and

drying the whole fish

wherein the treating, washing, draining and drying is performed after the aqueous alkali solution attached to the treated whole fish is washed or neutralized.

19. (Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the whole fish is boiled at a temperature from 90 to 100°C for a time of from 1 to 10 minutes.--

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Claims 7-9, 11-12, 14, and 16-19 are amended. Support for the amendment to the claims is found at page 5, line 21, to page 24, line 11, of the specification and in the original claims. No new matter is believed to be introduced by the amendment.

REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are pending. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 1-26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Sogabe is traversed below.

The present invention relates to a method of preventing whole fish from browning or darkening by treating the whole fish with an aqueous alkali solution from a compound selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium oxide, magnesium carbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, potassium hydrogen carbonate, and combinations thereof (see Claim 1).

Sogabe discloses a method of color-developing a surface of a crustacean's stripped body so that the body is colored red (see the Abstract, column 2, lines 48-59, column 9, lines 1-6, and Claim 1). Sogabe discloses that it is necessary to contact an alkaline aqueous solution with a carotenoid pigment that is present within the flesh of the crustacean's body in order to obtain a red color on the crustacean's body (see the Abstract, column 2, lines 48-59, column 9, lines 1-6, and Claim 1). Further, Sogabe discloses that the prevention of dark spots from appearing on the surface of a strip body of a crustacean is due to exposing the body of the crustacean to an alkaline aqueous solution having a pH value in a range of 10-14 and